

VZCZCXRO4443

PP RUEHAG RUEHAST RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHDF RUEHIK RUEHLH RUEHLD RUEHLZ

RUEHPW RUEHROV RUEHVK RUEHYG

DE RUEHAA #0501/01 1131109

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 221109Z APR 08

FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0647

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 3663

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1481

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1348

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 1917

RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 2436

RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000501

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL, SCA/PPD, IIP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RFE/RL REPORTER'S FAMILY OUTMANEUVERS AUTHORITIES TO CELEBRATE WEDDING

REF: ASHGABAT 00490

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: RFE/RL reporter Gulychdurdyev's son was finally married on April 21, but not before the family engaged in some creative maneuvering to outsmart authorities bent on ruining the wedding. Despite officials' meddling, the family still succeeded in gathering and celebrating. The whole affair, however, underscores the desire of MNB officials to put enough pressure on the reporter's family so that they will demand he stop his work. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) Following their success in getting one restaurant manager to back out of plans to host the wedding of RFE/RL reporter Halmurat Gulychdurdyev's son (reftel), Ministry of National Security (MNB) authorities on April 21 dissuaded a second restaurant manager from hosting the event, and the family, already under a great deal of stress, again had to find another venue willing to host them. At this point, the family decided to be more creative to prevent authorities from unraveling their celebration plans once again.

A WEDDING TAKES ON CLOAK-AND-DAGGER OVERTONES

¶4. (SBU) Gulychdurdyev called all the invitees and told them the wedding would be held at his apartment on the east side of town. Family and friends gathered there, and the bride and groom were also present. Several vehicles, decorated in bright bunting and other wedding regalia, then took off in different directions, in hopes of confusing authorities who appeared to be committed to ruining the celebration. The bulk of the invitees then got in their cars and followed Gulychdurdyev's car to an "undisclosed restaurant location," where the couple later re-appeared and were married.

¶5. (SBU) An hour and a half into the festivities, the electricity suddenly cut off, throwing the restaurant into darkness and silencing the musical ensemble. Throughout the course of the remainder of the evening, the electricity went

on and off several times. Almost all the more than 100 people at the wedding stayed to the end, and did not appear to be fearful that law enforcement might come and break up the event.

GULYCHDURDIYEV ON EDGE

¶6. (SBU) Gulychdurdiiyev expressed anger and frustration over the authorities' continued interference with his family. He marveled at the level of effort they put into ruining his son's wedding, as if "he were planning a coup." He lamented the need to organize the wedding so secretively, and it was apparent that the stress of the interference in the family's planning and of the wedding's potential cancellation had many on edge.

¶7. (SBU) When the lights went out the first time, guests hesitated only for a moment before running for candles and flashlights, and the drummer from the band began to play again. People resumed dancing after a few minutes, which Gulychdurdiiyev pointed out. "This is what a Turkmen protest looks like", he said. "What these people do to my family, because of their hatred of me, is simply inhuman." Friends voiced their agreement, saying that no matter what a conflict is about, it is totally inappropriate to interfere with a person's family.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Authorities appear focused on putting as much stress as possible on Gulychdurdiiyev's family to discourage him from continuing his work for RFE/RL. They also seem to be deeply concerned about the effect of his radio reports on the economic environment inside Turkmenistan, no doubt because inflation and economic

ASHGABAT 00000501 002 OF 002

uncertainty are fueling a certain degree of discontent. It is clear, however, that such interference has only hardened Gulychdurdiiyev's resolve to stand up to the authorities. Nevertheless, Gulychdurdiiyev's family is paying a price for his stance. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND